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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250-1340 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2612

May 28, 1993

Agri-Public

HUNGER FORUM -- USDA will conduct a hunger forum, June 17, in Washington, D.C. to establish an agenda for the Department to help end hunger in America. Participants will include persons affected by hunger, farmers, food industry executives, policy experts, academics, government and community leaders. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says, "We will discuss all aspects of hunger, including the need to reform our current welfare and nutrition programs." The hunger forum is one of seven issue forums that Espy will conduct around the country. The other topics are food safety/meat and poultry inspection, farm income and program simplification, rural America/its protection and development, agricultural trade and exports, and the environment. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

WIC WORKS -- A USDA study shows that infant mortality is one-quarter to two-thirds lower among medicaid beneficiaries who participated in the the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program than among those Medicaid beneficiaries who did not participate in WIC. The study results are consistent with earlier reports on WIC's impact on the Medicaid population, namely higher average birthweights, and a greater probability of receiving adequate prenatal care. "These findings further underscore the need for full-funding of the WIC program," says Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. "President Clinton and I are both committed to ensuring every eligible woman, infant and child receives these invaluable benefits by 1996." Contact: Phil Shanholtzer (703) 305-2286.

DIET CAUTION -- A recent study at the Human Nutrition Research Center in Grand Forks, ND reveals that diets high in the sugar fructose significantly increased cholestrol levels, especially the "bad" LDL cholestrol. Study participants also tended to have higher blood glucose levels while consuming nearly twice the level of fructose found in the average diet. If the findings are repeated in larger studies, it raises questions about the growing consumption of sugar, which is half fructose, and high-fructose corn syrups regularly added to processed foods and soft drinks. Contact: Forrest Nielsen (701) 795-8456.

FIRE ANTS -- New non-chemical methods are being studied to more effectively control fire ants, a human and agricultural pest in the southern states and Puerto Rico. USDA Agricultural Research Service scientists will work to improve a natural control called diatomaceous earth, the skeletal remains of tiny organism called diatoms. It kills fire ants by damaging their protective skins. The scientists will conduct tests on attractants to add to a mixture that will lure fire ants to a bait. Contact: Robert Vander Meer (904) 374-5918.

USING NATURE TO CONTROL WHITEFLIES -- Tests are being conducted this summer in seven states on a naturally occurring fungus that kills sweetpotato whitefly and boll weevils. These insects cost U.S. growers hundreds of millions of dollars a year in crop losses. The fungus, *Beauveria bassiana*, is sprayed on infested plants. Agricultural Research Service tests show that it is not harmful to humans. Contact: James Wright (210) 969-4876.

NEW PUBLICATION -- In July USDA's Economic Research Service will produce a new publication, "Industrial Uses of Agricultural Materials," in response to the need for information and analysis of the developing markets for farm-based industrial products. Plant and animal-based materials are being developed as inputs for manufacturing fuels, plastics, paper, newsprint, chemicals, and medicines. The publication will review the increased demand for environmentally friendly materials that is increasing investment in farm-based industrial products, and the new technologies that are lowering their costs. Contact: Robert Dismukes (202) 219-0313.

FARM WORKER NUMBERS -- Latest statistics show there were 2.8 million people working on farms and ranches in mid-April, an increase of about 10,000 during the same period a year ago. Self-employed farm operators totaled 1.4 million, there were 828,000 hired workers, 364,000 unpaid workers, and 224,000 agricultural service employees on farms and ranches. Farm operators paid hired workers an average wage of \$6.37 per hour, up 32 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average wage of \$6.04 per hour, up 36 cents, and livestock workers earned \$5.65 per hour, up 13 cents from year-ago figures. Benefits such as housing and meals were paid to 44 percent of hired workers, compared to 41 percent in April of 1992. Contact: Dan Ledbury (202) 720-1790.

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF U.S. AG LAND -- Foreign interests owned 14.5 million acres of privately owned agricultural land in the United States as of the close of last year, down two percent from a year earlier. Foreign holdings account for about 1 percent of privately owned U.S. agricultural land. The percentage has remained about the same since 1981. Forest land accounts for nearly half of all foreign owned acreage, most of it in Maine. Canadian investors are the largest group of foreign owners, at 25 percent. Japanese investors total only 3 percent of the foreign-held acreage. Contact: Peter DeBraal (202) 219-0425.

HELPING FAMILIES BECOME HOMEOWNERS -- 2,600 empty dwellings in 9 states held in inventory by USDA's Farmers Home Administration will be made available to inadequately housed families. The homes will be offered to housing authorities, nonprofit community-based organizations, or rented by the Farmers Home Administration. Families may apply to buy the house at any time during the lease. The program will eliminate the cost to taxpayers of maintaining the empty houses. USDA Secretary Mike Espy says he advocates allowing public housing tenants to buy their residences, noting homeownership fosters independence and pride. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4026.

CHEAPER ETHANOL -- New technologies are delivering less expensive ethanol and other plant-based alternatives to petroleum-based fuels. In inflation-adjusted terms, the cost of producing ethanol derived from corn has dropped 34 percent between 1980 and 1992, through the adoption of energy-saving innovations. Despite the lowering of production costs, the production of ethanol remains largely dependent on Federal support. The use of ethanol as a transportation fuel in the U.S. grew to nearly 900 million gallons in 1991. Over the longer term, production of ethanol on a large enough scale to substitute for gasoline is likely to come only from forms of organic material other than corn, such as municipal solid wastes, yard and wood wastes, recycled newspapers, and crops grown expressly for energy content. Contact: Cathy Greene (202) 219-0313.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1877 -- John Snyder reviews the growing popularity of beans and why some experts think that beans should be more popular. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1359 -- "Green" advertising claims; new roach control; confused about nutrition?; turkey on the grill; outdoor grill safety. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1869 -- USDA News Highlights; farm export update; wheat outlook; breeding for salt tolerance; viruses threaten California grapes. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1622 -- Salty tomatoes; marginal guayule; opus tracks pesticides; fungus catalog; fungal pharmaceuticals. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Thursday, June 3, western hemisphere outlook; Tuesday, June 8, crop & weather update; Thursday, June 10, U.S. crop production, world ag supply & demand; Friday, June 11, tobacco outlook, world ag production, world grain production, world oilseed situation, world cotton situation. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on a Mississippi River water quality project; DeBoria Janifer on the first statewide program for Electronic Benefits Transfer; Will Pemble on biopesticides; Dave Luciani of Michigan State University on a heroic plant doctor.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen has the U.S. crop and weather update; USDA economist Ed Allen on wheat; USDA economist Joel Greene on U.S. agricultural trade; USDA analyst Bill Liefert on agriculture in the former USSR.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on shoreline erosion control; Lynn Wyvill on at-risk food safety; DeBoria Janifer on the experimental food crop Purslane.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

MICHIGAN CHERRIES...are doing gang busters in Japan, says Owen Davis (Michigan Farm Radio Network, Lansing). Owen worked with the Cherry Marketing Institute to help capitalize on the TV program "Twin Peaks," in which the actors often visited a restaurant to have a cup of coffee and a piece of cherry pie. The program is being shown in Japan, and sales indicate the Japanese think cherries are neat, anything made with them is an instant craze. Also, Pat Driscoll at the network is working with drivers and personnel at the Indianapolis 500 to have a car entered into next year's race that is powered by ethanol.

WE'RE HOPING FOR DRY WEATHER...says Von Ketelsen (KOEL, Oelwein, IA) so producers can complete their planting. Von says 40,000 people attended a Farm Aid concert in Ames. It raised \$1 million. Von also covered live in Ames, IA a Congressional subcommittee conducting hearings on rural advocacy. Farm broadcasters advocate healthy exercise. On July 10 in Iowa City, Von will be providing live reports of the bicycle Heart Ride sponsored by the National Heart Association and the National Meet Board.

Farm Broadcasters Letter



Office of Public Affairs
Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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WE NEED MORE MOISTURE...says Bill Dalquist (KSIR/Colorado Farm-Ranch Network, Brush). Corn and bean planting is nearly completed, but producers need rain to assure the crop has a good start. Bill says beef producers in his area experienced above average winter kill of calves due to cold and damp conditions.

NO ONE SWITCHED...to early varieties of corn in the region served by Peggy Kaye Fish (WCUS/WFMB, Springfield, IL). Producers took advantage of a break in wet weather to put corn in the ground. But Peggy says many producers in southern Illinois remain behind schedule due to wetness and have planted their acres to beans.

WE MUST BE LIVING RIGHT...because planting was on schedule, no diseases have developed, and ground moisture is good, says Col. Dink Embry (WHOP, Hopkinsville, KY). Dink is observing his 48th year at WHOP. Number 49 arrives next January.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division